U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), through its Visa Security Program (VSP), assigns special agents to diplomatic posts worldwide to conduct law enforcement visa security activities and provide training to Department of State (DOS) offices regarding threats, trends, and other topics affecting visa adjudication.

**BACKGROUND**

- **Foundation**
  - After the attacks of September 11, 2001, Congress passed the Homeland Security Act of 2002
- **Authorization**
  - Section 428 authorized deployment of DHS officers to diplomatic posts to perform visa security activities
- **Creation**
  - In 2003, VSP was created and first deployed personnel to Saudi Arabia for visa security operations
- **Expansion**
  - VSP has expanded to 38 posts in 28 countries with a mandate to grow to additional visa issuing posts

**PROCESS**

VSP utilizes the automated screening capabilities of the Pre-Adjudicated Threat Recognition and Intelligence Operations Team (PATRIOT) to focus on five key activities creating value at posts around the world.

- **SCREEN**
  - Using PATRIOT, screen 100% of non-immigrant visa applications at the earliest point of the visa process before DOS
- **VET**
  - Analysts vet applications with derogatory information, using law enforcement, open source, and classified systems
- **COLLABORATE**
  - Agents coordinate with law enforcement, intelligence, and host country partners to maximize investigative efforts
- **RECOMMEND**
  - Produce a unified DHS recommendation to DOS on a subject’s visa eligibility
- **INVESTIGATE**
  - Agents conduct criminal investigations to exploit and disrupt criminal and terrorist organizations

**VALUE**

Prior to DOS visa adjudication, VSP annually screens over 2 million applicants at 38 visa issuing posts in 28 countries, creating an technologically advanced investigative window of opportunity and generating the following operational value:

- **Whole of Government Effort**
  - Specially-trained HSI special agents collaborate with government partners at post to **promote a unified screening and vetting effort**, including over 4,000 coordination activities with government entities in FY18. Special agents provide training and advice to consular officers on identified threats to better inform visa adjudication decisions.

- **Investigative Advantage**
  - Deployed HSI special agents utilize DHS investigative resources including **comprehensive interviews at post** and coordination with host government partners to maximize law enforcement and counterterrorism value. Through their investigative efforts, VSP special agents identify and disrupt previously **unknown threats** posed by transnational terrorist and criminal networks, instead of solely recommending the denial of travel.

- **Pre-Adjudication Approach**
  - VSP screening and vetting of visa applicants utilizes PATRIOT, an interagency endeavor with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), to **screen 100%** of NIV applications against **36 data points** prior to DOS adjudication. PATRIOT enables VSP to identify national security and other visa eligibility concerns at the **earliest point of an individual’s visa application life-cycle**.

- **Global Capacity for Growth**
  - HSI uses an **established data-driven site selection methodology** to guide VSP expansion in a manner that develops the program’s global capacity to protect U.S. national security. HSI is committed to the expansion of VSP operations, maximizing resources domestically and internationally to enhance the program’s investigative efforts abroad.